Bank loans to Journalists

141. SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA:

SHRI NARESH C. PUGLIA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Journalists are treated in "professionals" category by Reserve Bank of India for availing of loans from banks to buy vehicles etc;

(b) what are the names of categories treated as professionals by the Reserve Bank of India for disbursement of loans from nationalised banks;

(c) whether he has received any representation from the Press Association, New Delhi, in this regard;

(d) whether Government propose to provide loan facilities to accredited journalists from nationalised banks to buy vehicles for professional work; and

(e) if so, by when a decision is likely to be taken in the matter, and if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) Reserve Bank of India has reported that free lance journalists can be classified under "Professionals" category for the purpose of bank loans provided they satisfy the terms and conditions stipulated for availment of credit assistance from banks under priority sector.

(b) Professionals eligible to advances under priority sector include Medical Practitioners, Dentists, Chartered Accountants, Cost Accountants, Lawyers, Engineers, Architects, Management Consultants or persons holding either a degree or diploma in any other art or craft from any institution recognised by Government.

(c) Reserve Bank of India has reported that it has not received any representation from the Press Association, New Delhi.

(d) Loans to Professionals are extended for the purpose of purchasing equipment, repair or renovation of existing equipment or for purchase of tools. The banks can provide loans to an accredited journalist for the purchase of a vehicle, if it is considered essential for the professional work.

(e) Does not arise.

International Tea Promotion Association

142. SHRIMATI SUDHA VIJAY JOSHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to join International Tea Promotion Association; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor and what benefits are expected to accrue to our tea industry as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSHI): (a) and (b) During the recent visit of an Indian Tea Delegation to Sri Lanka, both the sides had discussions on mutual interest on International tea scene including the question of desirability of an International Commodity Agreement on Tea. During discussions both sides were of the view that a fresh approach be made among tea producing countries to work out the modalities of a Commodity Agreement. It was felt that the reconstitution of the International Tea Promotion Association in order to include all major tea producing countries and

the formulation of a programme of generic promotion designed to serve the interests of the tea producers would facilitate the efforts to work out a Commodity Agreement on Tea.

Smuggling of Gold

143. SHRIMATI SUDHA VIJAY JOSHI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that gold smuggling has doubled during this year as compared to last year leading to rise in inflation;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for the increase in gold smuggling; and

(c) what steps are being taken to arrest the activities of smugglers from across the borders of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) and (b) Since smuggling is a clandestine activtity, it is not feasible to estimate the quantum of gold that is being smuggled into the country. However, the quantum of gold seized during the last few calender years as shown in table below has shown an upward trend. This need not necessarily indicate a spurt in the smuggling of gold and could be due to the intensified drive against smuggling:—

Year	Golod seized (in Kgs.)
1986	2174
1987	2255
1988 . . . . (upto September)	3809 (provisional)

The main reasons for the continuance of smuggling of gold into the country are:—

(i) High domestic demand due to social customs;

(ii) Demand for hoarding purposes as a security;

(iii) Negligible indigenous production and supplies; and

(iv) Profitability due to wide differential between lower international prices and higher domestic prices.

(c) The anti-smuggling drive throughout the country has been intensified. The anti-smuggling machinery along the land borders and the coastline has been geared up. Sophisticated equipments like X-ray baggage machines, metal detectors and night vision binoculars are being increasingly utilised.

Export or non-basmati rice to East European Countries by Calcutta Firms

144. SHRI DIPEN GHOSH:
SHRI M.A. BABY:
SHRI SUNIL BASU RAY:
SHRI RAMNARAYAN GOSWAMI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that certain Calcutta firms, among others, have been awarded permits for export of non-basmati rice to East European countries; and

(b) if so, what are the names of these firms and the criteria on the basis of which they were awarded such permits?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSHI): (a)